



for a great state of health

Secondhand Smoke and Asthma

Overview

Secondhand smoke (SHS) is a combination of the smoke given off by the burning end of a cigarette, pipe, or cigar, and the smoke exhaled from the lungs of smokers. Asthma is a chronic respiratory disease characterized by episodes of inflammation and narrowing of small airways in response to asthma "triggers." SHS is one of the leading triggers for an asthma attack. Individuals living with asthma learn to control their asthma by following a management plan developed with their health care provider and learning to avoid asthma triggers, such as SHS, that can cause an attack.

Statistics

- In 2002, 22.7% of Nebraska's adults, age 18 and older, reported they were current smokers. *Source: 2002 Nebraska Adult Tobacco Survey*
- In 2002, approximately 130,000 Nebraskans had asthma (90,000 adults and 40,000 children age 17 and younger). *Source: 2002 Nebraska Adult Asthma Survey*
- In 2002, 28% of Nebraska households with a current asthmatic, reported that smoking was allowed inside of their residence. *Source: 2002 Nebraska Adult Asthma Survey*
- In 2002, 26% of Nebraska's current asthmatics reported that their worksite allowed smoking in all or some indoor areas. *Source: 2002 Nebraska Adult Asthma Survey*
- In 2000, the U.S. economic cost of asthma was estimated at \$16.1 billion. *Sources: National Heart, Lung and Blood Institute, U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, National Institute of Health*

Effects

Smoking not only affects the health of the smoker, but anyone exposed to his or her secondhand smoke.

- Recent studies of adults without an asthma diagnosis have found an association between SHS exposure and the risk of developing asthma. *Source: Environmental Protection Agency*
- In adults with established asthma, recent studies showed exposure to SHS resulted in an increase in asthma severity and a decline in their health status. *Source: Centers for Disease Control*
- Nationwide, secondhand smoke exposure increases the number of episodes and the severity of asthma in children who already have the disease, is a factor in up to 26,000 new cases of asthma in children, and worsens the condition in an estimated 200,000 to one million asthmatic children each year. *Source: American Lung Association*
- Children exposed to secondhand smoke in the home are more likely to develop asthma. Each year in the U.S., an estimated 11% of all asthma cases and more than 500,000 physician visits are due to smoking in the home. *Source: American Lung Association*
- Exposure to the smoke of as few as 10 cigarettes per day raises a child's chances of getting asthma even if that child has never had any symptoms. *Source: Centers for Disease Control*

Recommendations

- Smoking should not be allowed in the home or in the family car. Parents should only smoke outside the home or, better yet, quit smoking altogether.
- Make sure schools and daycare facilities have smoke-free policies.
- Show your support for increasing the number of smoke-free work places, including restaurants and bars, in your community.
- Patronize only smoke-free businesses/restaurants/bars and let them know the reason behind your choice.
- If secondhand smoke makes you uncomfortable or drives you out of a public place, let the management of the facility know why they are losing your patronage.

